



Greetings from the Land of Lincoln!

Springfield, IL, 7:00 am: I'm sipping coffee and waiting for my eggs at the Filling Station Restaurant, part of the Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center (last night's lodging). Mighty luxe after the more budget-minded accommodations we've been taking since departing Chicago! Our flight into Midway went without a hitch, and so began the odyssey that I alluded to in my phone message earlier in the week. My friend TJ got word on Monday that the children of a classic car collector in Cicero, IL, were willing to sell his mint condition 1968 Ford Mustang GT Fastback for a surprisingly reasonable price. The gentleman was moving to a retirement community, and no longer had space for his impressive array of vintage rides. Since the car is all about revisiting TJ's youth and his nostalgia for summer road trips, he was inspired to drive the car back to the west coast along Route 66. So, I find myself riding shot gun – with vintage Ray-Ban Wayfarers firmly atop my head!

To keep within the spirit of the “Mother Road” experience, we agreed to a number of ground rules before setting out:

1. **No iPods, MP3 players, XM/Sirius, CDs or cassettes.** When we're driving, we rely on whatever broadcast stations we can pick up. This was a hard condition for TJ to swallow, but he won a round when I caved in on an hour of WIFI each day – wherever it turned up. We both agreed on no texting, and limited email (TJ looked a bit green at this decision, but is taking it bravely). Postcards are encouraged and allowed.
2. **No television or videos.** For entertainment and diversion, we're reading books about the places we'll be visiting. We're both keeping journals, so this should occupy us (and help me not to miss CSI and Top Chef too much...).
3. **When possible, eat only at local diners and restaurants.** TJ is pretty psyched about this, and we hit the jackpot at the Filling Station – the horseshoe sandwich. He was munching antacid like crazy last night, but is undaunted, and ready to do it again for the breakfast version. Amazing how the allure of road food can make an ardent juicer and raw foods enthusiast cross over to the darkside!

Some highlights so far: TJ has been reading through *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg*, which he picked up at a used bookstore we found near the University of Chicago. I'm revisiting Sara Paretsky's mysteries and *Stephen B. Oates' With Malice Toward None: the Life of Abraham Lincoln* for this leg of the trip. We've been able to follow some good jazz stations out of Chicago, and can usually pick up a daily dose of

NPR. Lots of country and oldies on the airwaves, too! Many a strange and wondrous sight along the road, as well. A ways down the pike from Cicero, we were delighted to discover the “Gemini Giant” in Wilmington – a fine exemplar of a “muffler man”. Just north of Pontiac we had lunch at the Old Log Cabin – a Route 66 fixture of some years. A great selection of diner favorites populated the menu (sandwiches, plates) – but we ended up ordering numerous sides, with a slice of cream pie for dessert. Talk about a return to the foods of our childhoods! We’re seeing some good neon, and a variety of old gas stations. If only they remained active – and a battery of young men would race out to fuel and check the car...

Eggs are here, and so is TJ. Time to experience the awesomeness that’s the horseshoe sandwich one last time. More soon – from Missouri! Take care, and be well.